

*Washington, DC - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today released the following statement addressing President Obama's State of the Union remarks regarding shale gas.*

*Hinchey is a leader in Congress of the effort to protect drinking water and the environment from the risks of hydraulic fracturing. He is a co-author of the FRAC Act, which would mandate public disclosure of chemicals used in frack fluid and allow the EPA to regulate fracking activities under the Safe Drinking Water Act. The congressman also authored the appropriations language that led to the current EPA study on hydraulic fracturing.*

"Last year, I asked Interior Secretary Salazar if and when the administration would put in place strong disclosure provisions for chemicals used in hydraulic fracturing on public lands. Last night, President Obama gave us our answer. I am pleased to know that if drilling for natural gas occurs on public lands, the American people will know exactly what chemicals are being pumped into the ground, making it easier to hold drillers accountable if those chemicals end up in someone's well or our water supply. I am hopeful that he will move quickly to endorse legislation I have coauthored, which would extend this requirement to all hydraulic fracturing that takes place on American soil.

"I am disappointed, however, that the State of the Union address endorsed questionable estimates of shale gas reserves and overstated industry claims about job creation. Just this week, the Energy Information Administration slashed its shale gas reserve estimates by half. And given that the Environmental Protection Agency has yet to complete the first ever broad scale study on the risks hydraulic fracturing poses to drinking water, it is hard to see how the administration can make fully informed decisions on this matter at this time.

"The shale gas industry has made a habit of overstating fracking's benefits and understating its risks. It likes to point only to economic benefits, which are mostly isolated and temporary, while ignoring a rising number of reports of broken industry promises, harm to local communities, and air pollution and water contamination. Just recently, in Pavillion, Wyo., the Environmental Protection Agency found fracking chemicals in well water.

"We cannot afford to ignore these reports. If we don't take steps to safeguard our water resources, air quality, and public health, the harm we would suffer would far outweigh the purported economic benefits associated with fracking.

"We all know that the air we breathe and the water we drink don't respect state boundaries. That's why Congress passed laws like the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Safe Drinking Water Act. The fracking industry should have to abide by those public health laws, just like everyone else."